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ABSTRACT

The paper describes social studies skills of students age 9-adult as assessed by the 1971-2 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Project. NAEP organized skill exercise items around two subthemes: (1) obtaining information, including raising questions, seeking answers, identifying sources of information, and using standard reference sources and aids in locating information; and (2) interpreting graphs and maps, and using a variety of nontraditional sources of information. The paper contains selected released exercises developed to carry out assessment of the two categories. These skill exercises include multiple-choice tests, short essays, and longer essay-type written oral responses. Exercises are based on questions involving explanation of the human condition, insight into human affairs based on historical, philosophical, or literary information, and factual knowledge of events in American history. Findings indicated that respondents perform better on the items for obtaining information than on items dealing with interpreting information. It is concluded that NAEP results should be utilized as information sources for educators in setting curriculum norms rather than accepted as curriculum norms themselves. The NAEP social studies objectives for 1971-72 are presented in the appendix. (Author/DB)

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SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

by Jack Cousins

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a project of the Education Commission of the States was initiated in 1969-70. NAEP is an information gathering, not an evaluation or testing program, which periodically surveys educational attainments of 9, 13 and 17 year olds, as well as adults (ages 26-32) in ten subject areas. Included in the subject areas surveyed are those of social studies[1] and citizenship. Two areas are resurveyed each year with all areas being periodically covered. In future assessments, the areas of social studies and citizenship will be combined.

The social studies area was first assessed in 1971-72 and again in 1975-76. One half of the items, or exercises, used in 1971-72 were released while the remaining exercise items were secured for use in 1975-76. The remarks which are included here are based on the results of the first assessment as reported in Social Studies Technical Report: Exercise Volume.[2] Included in the social studies area of National Assessment are three related sub-areas: skills, knowledge and attitudes. Of concern here is the skills sub-area only. NAEP organized skill exercise items around two supporting areas or subthemes of "obtaining information" and "interpreting information." These subthemes

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[1]The Social Studies Objectives for 1971-72 are found in Appendix 1. They are also reported in Jean Fair (editor) NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1975).

[2]National Assessment of Educational Progress, SOCIAL STUDIES TECHNICAL REPORT: EXERCISE VOLUME (Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office).

were in turn related to the major objectives and subobjectives around which the entire social studies area was organized.

NAEP identified three supporting subskills for "obtaining information." The first is the skill of raising questions and seeking answers related to a variety of issues. Second is the subskill of identifying useful sources of information. The third supporting subskill is that of using standard reference sources and aids in locating information.

NAEP also identified three subskills for "interpreting information." First is the subskill of using basic problem-solving techniques of the social sciences. Second is the subskill of interpreting graphs and maps, and third is the subskill of using a variety of non-traditional sources of information.

In order to carry out the assessment functions, a variety of themes, or exercises were developed. Most common are multiple-choice items for which there is one correct, or preferred response. Secondly, there are items which required the respondent to provide a short, written answer. Items of this type often required an answer plus a reason or reasons for it. The third type of item required longer, essay-type written responses, or a long oral response. Responses for all three types of items were judged acceptable or non-acceptable.

Since not all social studies items have been released, the results reported here are for one-half of the skill items used in the 1971-72 assessment. Data for the unreleased items are contained in the Social Studies Technical Report,[3] but since the exercises themselves were not, no reference to them will be made here.

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[3]National Assessment of Educational Progress, op. cit.

Although NAEP did not intend to assess skills which might be identified as decision making, group process, social action, reflective thinking or valuing, it does appear that the skills pertaining to "Obtaining Information" and "Interpreting Information" are certainly supportive of higher level skills. Another way of looking at the skills assessed is that they emphasize the cognitive domain of educational objectives, but the items do not necessarily concentrate on the lower levels of the cognitive areas. This is especially true of the items related to "Interpreting Information." It is apparent that some items required considerable understanding, interpretation, and application before a meaningful response could have been made.

The following pages contain selected released exercises identified as skill items. Each item is reported with the national level of acceptable performance for each age group responding, and acceptable performance levels for each of four geographic regions, southeast, west, central and northeast are also indicated. Although readily available, data relative to sex, race, parental education, and size and type of community are not included here. Immediately preceding each item is information which places it within the scheme of NAEP objective, themes and subobjectives. Each item will be identified by one of the subthemes--Interpreting Information or Obtaining Information. In addition, the general social studies objective will be identified by the use of a Roman numeral, and subobjectives will appear in descriptive form. This is done since it is not clear which subobjective is involved if simple letter identification is used.

It is important for the reader to realize that the items presented were chosen to illustrate the types of questions used. There was no intention of selecting items which might be, for a variety of reasons, used to suggest any hidden agenda.

Interpreting Information Exercises

Exercise:	RS101
Subtheme:	Interpreting Information
Objective II	Use Analytic-Scientific Procedures Effectively
Subobjective:	E. Detect logical errors, unstated assumptions, and unwarranted assertions; question unsupported generalizations; are aware of the complex nature of social causation and understand that the sequence of relationship does not necessarily imply causation.
Objective:	V. Have a reasoned commitment to the values that sustain a free society.
Subobjective:	B. Believe in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify their belief.

Suppose a friend of yours says children with black hair and blue eyes are smarter than others.

A. Tell me what you think about this.

_____

_____

_____

_____

(If respondent answers "Nothing" OR no response is given in 10 seconds, go to next exercise.

If response is given, go to B.)

B. Why do you feel the way you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Stop if no response is given in 10 seconds.)

Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age	National	Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
0	63.7	-4.8	-9.3	3.3	9.7

Exercise RS 101 was administered to the nine-year-old group only. Nationally, 63.7% of that group provided an acceptable set of responses. In the Southeast region of the nation. 4.8% fewer responded acceptably. Or, in other words, 58.9% of the respondents in the Southeast provided acceptable answers. In the West 9.3% fewer participants offered acceptable responses (54.4% of the responses in the West were acceptable). In the Central region the successful rate exceeded the national average by 3.3% or a success percentage of 67, while in the Northeast region, 73.4% of the responses were successful. This exceeded the national rate by 9.7%. Performance on all items is reported by a national percentage with regional differences indicated by the appropriate positive or negative percentage. Acceptable answers to exercise RS 101 included the following:

a. Recognizes that generalization cannot be supported and can tell why, and states that discrimination is wrong.

b. Recognizes that discrimination is wrong.

c. Recognizes that generalization cannot be supported and can tell why.

Exercise RS 101 illustrates one of the three types of responses, the short essay or verbal response. It is important to note that minimal levels of acceptable performance have not been established. There has been one, somewhat indirect effort to identify realistically satisfactory performance levels by a National Council for the Social Studies committee,[4] but this was not a part of the official NAEP function. One

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[4]National Council for the Social Studies, NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION (Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1975), pp. 45-47, and 105-114.

cannot, therefore, assume that a 25%, or 65% acceptable performance on a given item is good or bad in reference to some previously established criterion. Judgments about the goodness or badness of performance must be made by individual teachers or school districts.

It is important to realize that exercises deliberately were written at various levels of difficulty. One-third of the exercises were easy. It was hoped that 90% of any given group could respond to these with success. One-third were of moderate difficulty, and it was hoped that 50% of any given group could respond to these successfully. Finally, one-third of the exercises were difficult. It was hoped that 10% of any given group could respond successfully.[5]

Even though such a process might imply criteria for establishing acceptable levels of performance, such was not the intention of NAEP. Experienced educators, however, can readily develop defensible inferences about whether performance levels are desirable or not.

Exercise RS 113, which follows illustrates the use of a multiple choice item appropriate for a different objective (III) and subobjective (D). It was administered to the three older groups, but not to the nine year olds. On the surface, it appears to be a relatively simple task, but it does assume the skill of being able to identify factual language as compared to opinionated language. This skill must then be applied to the particular situations provided in the exercise.

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[5]The National Assessment of Educational Progress, WHAT IS NATIONAL ASSESSMENT? (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 12.

Exercise: RS 113
Subtheme: Interpreting Information
Objective III Are Sensitive to Creative-Intuitive Methods of Explaining the Human Condition
Subobjective D Distinguish personalized explanations of human affairs from scientific-objective explanations.

Read the following statements made by four speakers. You will be asked to tell which speaker bases his opinion on facts rather than on his personal feelings.

Speaker I: I think Hunter lost the election because members of his own political party failed to support him. I heard from Walters that the Crash Party decided at a secret meeting not to work for Hunter but to support his opponent, Pallor.

Speaker II: I don't think so. Hunter's campaign manager told me that Pallor's workers were buying votes. They were offering the people two dollars each if they would vote for Pallor. That's why Hunter lost.

Speaker III: I disagree with both of you. According to a poll taken after the election, 84 percent of the people questioned said they voted for Pallor because he promised to lower taxes. Hunter lost the election largely because of this issue.

Speaker IV: It is perfectly obvious that Hunter lost because of his religion. I've heard people all over town whispering that they would never vote for a member of that religion.

Which speaker bases his opinion more on facts than on his personal feelings?

Speaker I

Speaker II

(X) Speaker III

Speaker IV

Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age	National	Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
13	77.5	-3.7	-4.0	1.5	5.4
17	91.3	-2.5	0.1	2.3	-0.4
Ad	89.0	-3.1	2.0	1.1	-0.6

The results for Exercise RS 113 illustrate an occurrence noticed frequently--the adult group scored lower than the 17-year-old age group. It also shows that thirteen-year-olds in the Northeast Region scored higher than their counterparts in other regions. Although this is not true with all items, it is an occurrence which does appear quite frequently. Even though RS-113 is classified as one pertaining to skills, it should be recognized that the major objective (III) is to some degree, related to creative thinking, values and higher level knowledge from history, the arts, and social sciences. It is, therefore, quite difficult to determine just what the results of the exercise indicate about skill development itself. Even with this possible shortcoming, the general desirability of NAEP exercises, using NCSS Guidelines[6] as a referent, was found to be quite high. According to a panel 87% of the exercises were judged to be desirable. It must be noted, however, that only 66% of the exercises were judged to be "very great" and "high" in degree of desirability while 21% were judged to be "moderate," 6% to be "some" and 3% to be "little" in degree of desirability.[7]

Exercise RS 120 which follows is an illustration of using an item for multiple objectives. Even though it is classified under the skills theme, it is also classified under the theme of knowledge. Such items are based on an assumption that respondents would have some familiarity with the knowledge base of the exercise. In the case of item RS 120,

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[6]National Council for the Social Studies, SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM GUIDELINES (Washington, D.C.: 1971).

[7]NCSS, NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION, op. cit., pp. 45-47.

it is assumed that respondents already have knowledge about the Declaration of Independence, especially its meaning.

It is to be noted that levels of performance are here reported for responses "C" and "D." Even though the data are reported for responses "A" and "B," the items as such were retained for use in the 1975-76 assessment.

Exercise: RS 120C and RS 120D
Subtheme: Interpreting Information
Theme Knowledge
Subtheme: History
Objective: IV. Have knowledge relevant to the major ideas and concerns of social scientists. Understand some of the major historical developments.

Subobjective: The American Declaration of Independence states:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. . . ."

Do the following sentences restate ideas expressed in this quotation from the Declaration of Independence?

C. Some rights can never be rightfully taken away.

(X) Yes
( ) No
( ) I don't know.

D. Governments get their right to govern from the people.

(X) Yes
( ) No
( ) I don't know.

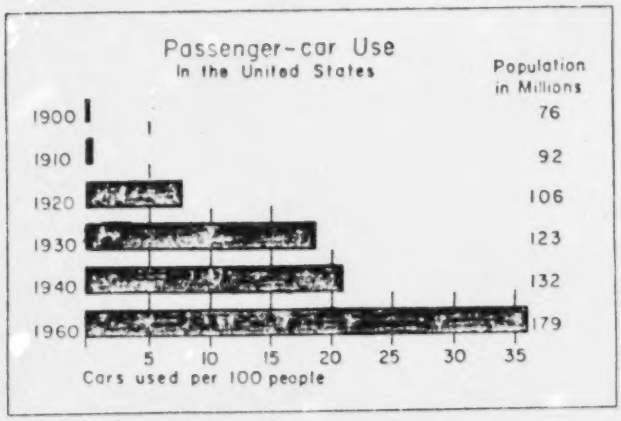
Levels of Acceptable Performance

RS 120C			Regional Differences		
Ages	National	Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
13	75.0	-1.0	-2.0	2.1	0.6
17	79.5	1.8	-5.7	-0.2	4.0
Ad	78.0	-3.8	-0.4	1.7	1.6
RS 120D					
13	80.4	-0.8	1.4	0.6	-1.4
17	89.9	3.0	-1.5	-1.3	0.3
Ad	94.0	-2.2	1.4	-0.4	0.9

Exercise RS 121, which follows, is illustrative of the multiple choice type items. In this particular case, major Objective II is being assessed. The respondent is required to read and interpret a bar graph, and in addition, apply the information presented to a question. It is possible that some persons could read the graph, but would be puzzled by the question which requires interpretation and application. Even though RS 121 seems to be a very simple item, only 44.3% of the thirteen-year-olds, 57.3% of the seventeen-year-olds, and 53.6% of the adults responded acceptably. It is difficult to infer why there should be such questionable performance. The fact that the question itself requires the interpretation and application could be the cause or it could be that respondents simply were unable to read a relatively simple bar g aph. Although the skills involved in distinguishing facts from opinions are presumably assessed by this item, it is difficult to identify the particular part of the exercise that would do this.

Exercise: RS 121
Subtheme: Interpreting Information
Objective: II Use analytic-scientific procedures effectively.
Subobjective: C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.
Subobjective: D. Distinguish facts from opinions, relevant from irrelevant information, and reliable from unreliable sources.

Look at the graph and answer the question below it.



Does this graph show that more money was spent on building and improving the roads in the United States in 1960 than in 1900?

( ) Yes

(X) No

( ) I don't know.

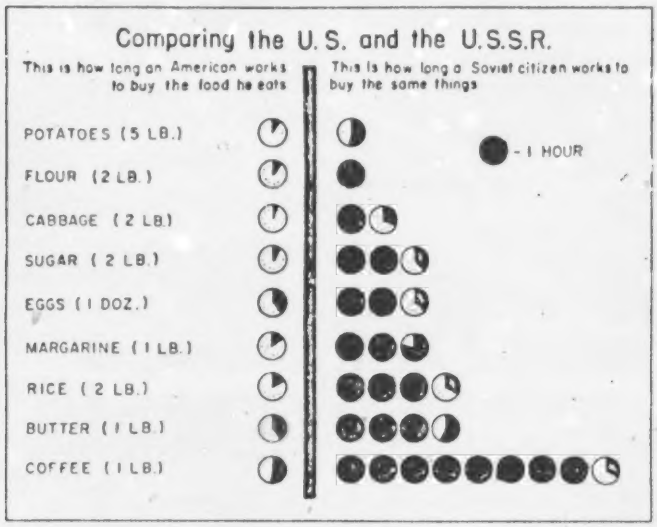
Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age	National	Regional Differences			
		Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9	-				
13	44.3	-12.3	0.8	3.5	6.2
17	67.3	- 6.9	8.0	3.3	10.4
Ad	53.6	- 7.7	5.6	-0.5	1.4

Exercise RS 125, which follows is a more complex item than exercise RS 121. First, this exercise requires an accurate reading of the clock which symbolizes the amount of labor required to earn enough to purchase various commodities. The wage received is shown in an inverse manner. In other words, if the clock indicates a small amount of time required, it is indicating that one earns much more than if the time required is larger. This may have confused some respondents, especially the younger ones. Despite this possible problem, it is quite discouraging to note the low performance by all age groups, since careful reading of the exercise should have resulted in clear understanding.

This exercise illustrates the NAEP practice of using a major objective (in this case, objective II) and using a subobjective from other major objectives. For Exercise RS 125, subobjective "E" is found under major objective I. This is not meant to suggest that such a practice invalidates any NAEP exercises, but it is somewhat confusing to those who are attempting to determine what is really measured by each exercise.

Exercise: RS 125
Subtheme: Interpreting Information
Objective: II. Use analytic-scientific procedures effectively
Subobjective: E. Detect logical errors, unstated assumptions, and unwarranted assertions; question unsupported generalizations, are aware of the complex nature of social causation and understand that the sequence or relationship does not necessarily imply causation.


Comparing the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.
This is how long an American works to buy the food he eats
This is how long a Soviet citizen works to buy the same things
POTATOES (5 LB.)
FLOUR (2 LB.)
CABBAGE (2 LB.)
SUGAR (2 LB.)
EGGS (1 DOZ.)
MARGARINE (1 LB.)
RICE (2 LB.)
BUTTER (1 LB.)
COFFEE (1 LB.)
= 1 HOUR

According to the graph above, which one of the following statements is TRUE?

Russians eat more cabbage than Americans.

Russians work more hours per day than Americans.

More coffee is grown in Russia than in the United States.

(X) Russians work approximately 6 times longer to buy a dozen eggs than Americans work.

I don't know.

Levels of acceptable performance

Age	National	Regional Differences			
		Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9	-				
13	24.0	1.2	-3.9	1.5	0.8
17	42.4	-5.4	-2.8	2.1	4.7
Ad	54.3	-5.1	0.6	1.7	1.8

Exercise RS 132, the final illustrative item for the subtheme "Interpreting Information," is an item for which a longer essay response was required. For this particular item, respondents were required to have rather good listening skills, and they were required to translate the selection into their own words. Finally, it was necessary to present this translation in written form. Performance for this exercise seems quite poor since only 32.8% of the thirteen-year-olds and 43.1% of the seventeen-year-olds respond in acceptable fashion. Even though NAEP classified this item as "Interpreting Information" it seems more complex than a straightforward interpretation, since the personal values of respondents would probably influence individual interpretations. This is not to suggest a condemnation of such a practice, but it does illustrate the complexities involved in assessing education outcomes.

Exercise: RS 132
Subtheme: Interpreting Information
Objective: III. Are sensitive to creative-intuitive methods of explaining the human condition.
Subobjective: B. Obtain insight into human affairs from history and philosophy, and from fiction and other forms of art.

Please listen carefully to this recording of "Walk A Mile In My Shoes."

While listening, try to identify the main idea or message expressed in this recording.

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES

If I could be you and you could be me for just one hour,
If we could find a way to get inside each other's mind.
If you could see you through my eyes instead of your ego,
I believe you'd be surprised to see that you'd been blind.

CHORUS
Walk A Mile In My Shoes,
Walk A Mile In My Shoes,
And before you abuse, criticize and accuse,
Walk A Mile In My Shoes.

Now your whole world you see around you is just a reflection
And the law of common says you reap just what you sow.
So unless you've lived a life of total perfection
You'd better be careful of every stone that you should throw.

And yet we spend the day throwing stones at one another
'Cause I don't think or wear my hair the same way you do.
Well I may be common people but I'm your brother
And when you strike out and try to hurt me it's a-hurtin' you.

Chorus repeated

There are people on reservations and out in the ghettos
And, brother, there but for the grace of God go you and I.
If I only had the wings of a little angel
Don't you know I'd fly to the top of the mountain and then I'd cry.

Chorus repeated

What is the main idea or message expressed in this recording?_____

_____

_____

Levels of acceptable performance

Age	National	Regional Differences Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9					
13	32.7	-5.0	-5.4	0.1	9.7
17	43.1	-2.9	-3.7	3.0	2.5

Although there were fifteen (15) exercises designed to assess the skills pertaining to "Interpreting Information," only six were presented here. This was done to illustrate the indicated practices involved. The table which follows summarizes other data pertaining to the number of times objectives were assessed and the levels of performance for each item.

Frequency with Which Major Objectives and Subobjectives Were Assessed by Skill Exercises for Interpreting Information

Major Objectives	I	0	II	8	III	7	IV	1	V	1
	A	1	A	0	A	0	A	0	A	0
	B	0	B	0	B	3	B	0	B	1
Subobjectives	C	4	C	0	C	0	C	0	C	0
	D	1					D	0	D	0
	E	3					E	1	E	0
	F	0					F	0	F	0
TOTAL		9		8		14		2		2

The five major objectives for 1971-72 NAEP assessment were measured a total of seventeen times by the fifteen released exercises designed for "Interpreting Information." It is noticeable that Objective II "Use Analytic-Scientific Procedures Effectively" was measured eight times and Objective III "Are Sensitive to Creative-Intuitive Methods of Explaining the Human Condition" was measured seven times. Objective I "Have Curiosity About Human Affairs" was not measured while Objectives IV and V were measured once each. On the other hand subobjectives falling under major objective I were measured a total of nine times. It is noticeable that major objectives IV "Have Knowledge Relevant to the Major Ideas and Concerns of Social Scientists" and V "Have a Reasoned

Commitment to the Values that Sustain a True Society" were almost excluded as were the subobjectives for major area II. Subobjectives were examined a total of 35 times, but subobjectives were assessed only two times for each of the major objectives IV and V.

To a degree it is understandable that such should occur. The language used with objectives IV and V, especially that for the subobjectives emphasize understandings and beliefs, is difficult to relate to specific skills. On the other hand, it does seem possible to gather information relative to decision making skills, and the skills of developing concepts and generalizations.

As indicated previously, NAEP exercises have considerable merit. But, the fact that objectives IV and V are assessed very little, raises questions about what has been omitted. Skills dealing with the ability to identify and use concepts, the ability to develop generalizations using concepts, and the skills utilized in recognizing and analyzing values were not substantially assessed by these exercises. This suggests that NAET, as represented by the "Interpreting Information" exercises presents a somewhat limited perspective of social studies skills.

The previous statement is not meant to be a condemnation of NAEP. The data generated are extremely important and do provide much insight about educational outcomes. Even though one might hope for additional information in future assessments, we must consider seriously data already generated. The discussion which follows the next table will expand this notion.

The table which follows summarizes national performance on released skill exercises for the subtheme "Interpreting Information."

National Performance on "Interpreting Information" Exercises

Exercise	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
RS 101	63.7	-	-	-
RS 111	-	59.5	80.5	76.4
RS 113	-	77.5	91.3	89.0
RS 116	-	-	30.9	39.3
RS 117 (Response C)	53.1	71.0	78.8	72.3
Response D	57.0	80.4	86.7	82.4
RS 118	-	-	75.4	78.9
RS 120 (Response C)	-	75.0	79.5	78.0
Response D	-	80.4	89.9	94.0
RS 121	-	44.3	67.3	53.6
RS 123	-	89.4	96.4	91.0
RS 125	-	24.0	42.4	54.3
RS 126	-	23.6	33.9	34.4
RS 128	80.7	95.3	96.8	96.9
RS 131	-	82.9	88.1	91.3
RS 132	-	32.8	43.1	-
RS 133	-	22.2	39.3	38.9

It is perhaps an unwarranted enterprise to attempt an analysis of the performance on these exercises since no reference criteria have been established. At the same time, it is readily apparent that performance on some items was disturbing. For example, item RS 111 was one in which syllogistic reasoning was employed relative to freedom of speech, democracy and Nazi Germany. The responses, as shown above, seem disturbing, especially for the adult population. Item RS 116 required respondents to identify the most precise of four statements related to a research study dealing with smoking. The very low percentages for the seventeen-year-olds and the adults suggest that many persons in our

society have difficulty in differentiating between general and specific statements. Item RS 121, one of the illustrative exercises, required students to interpret the information presented on a simple bar graph. Performance for the three older groups, as shown above, is disturbing to this writer. The graph was simple and it was readable yet large percentages of the respondents failed to supply acceptable answers. This performance was consistent for the same age groups on item RS 125, a somewhat more complicated presentation of graphed information (previously illustrated). Similar low performances were also noticed for RS 126 which utilized map reading skills involving longitude and latitude. These low scores might suggest a weakness in teaching map reading and interpretation, or a lack of skills in reading itself. Another somewhat disturbing set of data are those for RS 132 which required listening to "Walk A Mile In My Shoes" and describing in writing what the piece was about. Such low scores might suggest a lack of empathy with less fortunate persons, a lack of listening skills, or a lack of skills necessary to identify the main ideas of songs, poems or works of fiction.

The lowest scores generated by any item were those for RS 133. This particular item required respondents to listen to a recording taken from South Pacific and then to identify the main idea.

Even though NAEP skill exercises might be criticized for dealing with some objectives more than others, it appears obvious that educators need to closely examine student performance in curricular areas represented

by the items used. Although no generally approved set of standards has been established it is quite clear that performance on many items is not very substantial, including exercises which simply require one to read materials which are clearly presented. The poorest performance on skill exercises for "Interpreting Information" was for those items which required respondents to identify and present, in writing, a main idea. NAEP data seem to suggest that certain skills are learned indirectly and not as a direct result of activities designed to teach the skills as content.

Obtaining Information

The following pages contain selected exercises which illustrate those used for the subtheme, "Obtaining Information." Item RS 005 (below) was administered to all age groups. Responses were considered acceptable or not acceptable according to the reasons advanced by respondents.

Exercise: RS 005
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Objective: I. Have curiosity about human affairs.
Subobjective: A. Raise questions and seek answers.

A. Which ONE of the following people would you MOST want to talk to?

City planner

Labor leader

Lawyer

Mayor

Sheriff

TV newsman

None of the above.

B. If you selected one of the people above, what is the ONE question you would ask him about his work?

_____

_____

_____

Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age		Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9	73.4	-0.9	0.6	1.2	-1.0
13	67.0	-1.8	3.0	-1.2	0.1
17	66.2	0.0	0.7	0.7	-1.5
Ad	62.0	-8.2	2.3	3.5	0.4

Even a casual reading of exercise RS 005 raises questions about the skills it was designed to assess. It is certainly acceptable that the ability to ask a significant question is important, but it appears that one's response to this exercise would depend heavily upon his/her value orientations.

Exercise RS 006 illustrates the use of multiple objectives for one exercise. Even though it is listed as a skills item, it is also a knowledge exercise concerned with information from the field of political science. Performance on this exercise seems fairly low for all groups. It does appear, however, that the knowledge aspect of this particular item is about as evident as are skills. On the other hand, the results on this exercise suggest that information about elections is stressed in schools more than information about political process skills.

Exercise: RS 006
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Theme: Knowledge Subtheme: Political Science
Objective: I. Have questions about human affairs
Objective: II. Use analytic-scientific procedures effectively
Subobjective: C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.

Suppose there are two men running for mayor in your town. One candidate thinks a large area of land in your community should be made into a public park, and the other candidate thinks the land should be used for industry.

A. Tell me two things you could do to find out why each candidate thinks as he does.
(1)
(2)

Respondents were given 10 seconds in which to initiate a response.

Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age	National	Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9	-	-	-	-	-
13	42.1	-12.4	-4.2	7.4	6.1
17	62.2	- 1.7	-3.7	3.8	0.8
Ad	68.9	- 7.6	6.2	0.3	-0.3

Exercise RS 009 which follows, appears to be more closely related to the skill of obtaining information. In order to respond acceptably, one must know the type of information contained in the sources used.

On the other hand, this exercise might be assessing knowledge about skills rather than the skills themselves. This points to an unavoidable problem in the entire area of the skills parts of NAEP. Skills, by their very definition require "doing." Paper and pencil exercise cannot assess the skills themselves, unless they are literary skills. This exercise would have been much stronger if more types of sources were used and if it had been given to several age groups.

Exercise: RS 009
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Objective: II. The analytic-scientific procedures effectively.
Subobjective: C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.
D. Distinguish facts from opinions, relevant from irrelevant information, and reliable from unreliable sources.

Fill in the oval beside "Yes" if the book or thing listed below would probably give you information about the early settlement of your state. Fill in the oval beside "No" if it probably would not give you information. If you do not know the answer, fill in the oval beside "I don't know."

A. Would a DICTIONARY give you information about the early settlement of your state?

Yes
(X) No
I don't know

B. Would an ENCYCLOPEDIA give you information about the early settlement of your state?

(X) Yes
No
I don't know

National Level of Acceptable Performance

		Regional Differences			
Age		Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
9	68.4	-4.2	-5.7	1.9	7.9 (For response A)
0	80.4	-5.3	-3.1	3.3	5.0 (For response B)

Exercise RS 014 which follows, is more complex than RS 009. This one requires several responses and it requires respondents to assess the validity of several sources of information.

Levels of performance were quite high for this exercise as one would expect.

Although the differences are not very large, it is interesting to realize that respondents were more certain about television than they were about newspapers and encyclopedia.

Exercise: RS 014
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Objective: II. Use Analytic Scientific Procedures Effectively.
Subobjective: C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.
Subobjective: D. Distinguish facts from opinions, relevant from irrelevant information, and reliable from unreliable sources.

Suppose someone wanted to know what had happened in our country or in the world within the last 24 hours. Would each of the following be a good way for that person to find out?

C. Would reading the daily newspaper be a good way to find out what had happened in the last 24 hours?

(X) Yes

No

I don't know.

D. Would looking in an encyclopedia be a good way to find out what had happened in the last 24 hours?

Yes

(X) No

I don't know.

E. Would watching the news on television be a good way to find out what had happened in the last 24 hours?

(X) Yes

No

I don't know

Age		Regional Differences							
9	86.7	-2.1	2.1	-0.7	0.6	88.5	-5.5	-1.0	2.9	3.1
13	98.1	0.7	0.1	0.2	-1.2	97.6	-0.1	-1.1	1.0	0.1
(Above for response C)						(Above for response D)				

9	93.7	-2.3	1.0	0.6	0.5
13	98.7	0.4	-0.4	0.1	-0.1
(Above for response E)					

Exercise RS 018 is an item for which there was no previously determined acceptable response. The acceptability of any response depended upon the reason presented for it. Although the percentage of acceptable responses is quite high, one might hope that students might be more critical. In other words, the idea of a well-informed citizenry might suggest that acceptable performance should have been much higher.

Exercise: RS 018
Theme: Skills
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Objective: I. Have Curiosity About Human Affairs
Subobjective: B. Are open to new information and ideas.

(Before reading this exercise, give respondent the supplementary package opened to page 1.)

A. If you were to receive summaries of two new scientific studies on smoking, one of which was reported by the government and the other by the tobacco industry, which would you read? (Read ALL choices on the handout to respondent)

The government report only (Go to B)

The tobacco industry report only (Go to B)

Both the government and the tobacco industry reports (Go to B)

Neither the government nor the tobacco industry report (Go to B)

I don't know. (Go to next exercise)

No response (After TWENTY seconds, go to next exercise)

B. Please give a reason for your answer:

_____

_____

Age					
9					
13	64.6	-10.1	3.2	2.9	3.4
17	77.3	1.8	-2.8	0.6	0.5
Ad	79.1	-2.5	1.4	3.8	-3.7

Exercise RS 021 which follows, is one of the more difficult items dealing with finding information with particular emphases. In this case, the student was required to identify the best source for information relative to Lincoln's attitude toward the South, and the South's attitude toward Lincoln? In order to perform acceptably, the respondent had to eliminate those sources which were likely to present an incomplete or biased point of view. But, when one examines the item itself some questions are rasied. It is somewhat questionable to assume that there would be a "southern" feeling about Lincoln. And, when one notices the publisher of the correct response, a question about the ability of a single southern writer to assess Lincoln's attitudes toward the South is raised. Finally, this exercise might be more appropriate as an "Interpreting Information" item since, in order to score correctly, the respondent had to interpret what was presented.

Exercise: RS 021
Theme: Skills
Subtheme: Obtaining Information
Objective: II. Use Analytic-Scientific Procedures Effectively
Subobjective: C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.
Subobjective: D. Distinguish facts from opinions, relevant from irrelevant information, and reliable from unreliable sources.

Suppose you were studying the Civil War in your social studies class and you wanted to find the answers to these two questions:

How did Lincoln feel about the South?
How did the South feel about Lincoln?

On the opposite page are four of the cards you might find under LINCOLN, ABRAHAM in the card catalogue in the school library.

Fill in the oval beside the card for the book that would BEST help you answer the two questions above.

( )

B Brooks, Noah, 1830-1903
LIN Abraham Lincoln, and the downfall of American slavery, by Noah Brooks. New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894.

1. Lincoln, Abraham, Pres. U.S., 1809-1865.

( )

LINCOLN, ABRAHAM, President United States, 1809-1865

B Gore, John Rogers, 1874-
LIN The boyhood of Abraham Lincoln; from the spoken narratives of Austin Gollaher, illustrated from photographs. Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1921.

1. Lincoln, Abraham, Pres. U.S., 1809-1865.

( )

B Leland, Charles Godfrey, 1824-1903
LIN Abraham Lincoln and the abolition of slavery in the United States, by Charles Godfrey Leland. New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1879.

1. Lincoln, Abraham, Pres. U.S., 1809-1865.
2. U.S. History-Civil War.

(X)

LINCOLN, ABRAHAM, President United States, 1809-1865

B Randall, James Garfield, 1881-
LIN Lincoln and the South, by J.G. Randall. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1946.

1. Lincoln, Abraham, Pres. U.S., 1809-1865.
2. Southern states-politics and government, 1775-1865.

( ) **I don't know.**

Levels of Acceptable Performance

Age		Regional Differences			
		Southeast	West	Central	Northeast
13	77.9	-3.7	-2.0	-0.3	5.4

Of the fifteen exercises used to assess skills relative to "Obtaining Information," six were reviewed here. Similar to the treatment of the skills for "Interpreting Information," one finds that not all objectives were covered by these.

Frequency with Which Major Objectives Were Assessed by Skills Exercises for Obtaining Information

Major Objectives	I 6	II 12	III 0	IV 0	V 0
	A-0	A-3	A-0	A-0	A-0
	B-0	B-1	B-0	B-0	B-0
	C-10	C-0	C-0	C-0	C-0
	D-6			D-0	D-0
	E-0			E-0	E-0
	F-0				F-0
Totals	22	6	0	0	0

Of the five major objectives for the 1971-72 NAEP assessment, only two were measured by skill exercises for "Obtaining Information." These were measured a total of 18 times. To some degree it is understandable that Objective I and Objective II were the major target of these exercises. But, on the other hand, it is highly questionable that obtaining information relative to the remaining three objectives is not important. When one examines the subobjectives, it is striking that only those falling under major Objectives I and II were assessed. Subobjective (I)-C was assessed ten times, an observation which seems warranted in light of the idea of obtaining information. Subobjective (I)-D was assessed six times, but subobjective (I)-E was not assessed at all. Both of these last two subobjectives seem to be related in the sense

that the skills identified are quite often listed as thinking skills, especially those related to critical thinking. Although the exercises used have been judged to be generally good, it does appear that NAEP is limiting the scope of its assessment.

Summary of NAEP Released Skills Exercises
(Obtaining Information)

Exercise	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
RS 001	69.0(2)			
RS 003	83.4	84.1	-	-
RS 005	73.4	67.0	66.2	62.0
RS 006 (2 responses)		42.1	62.2	68.9
RS 007	-	37.9	58.8	66.1
RS 008 (Response "A")	91.1			
(Response "D")	75.7			
RS 009 (Response "A")	68.4			
(Response "B")	80.4			
RS 011	67.5			
RS 013 (1 response)	78.5			
(2 responses)	50.1			
(3 responses)	19.3			
RS 014 (Response "C")	86.7	98.1		
(Response "D")	88.5	97.6		
(Response "E")	93.7	98.7		
RS 017		88.6	93.6	96.7
RS 018		64.6	77.3	79.1
RS 019 (Response "A")	35.7			
(Response "D:)	73.2			
RS 020		82.2		
RS 021		77.0		
RS 022 (3 correct)		44.7	70.3	66.6
(2 correct)		67.0	86.3	83.8

Respondents, considered as a whole, seemed to perform better on the items for "Obtaining Information" than they did for those items dealing with "Interpreting Information." For RS 006, respondents were

asked to identify two things s(he) could do to find out why mayoral candidates thought as they did about making a public park. Only 42.1% of the thirteen-year-old group could do this. In the seventeen-year-old group, 66.2% were able to provide two ways of doing this and 62.0% of the adults were able to do likewise. These data are consistent with the observation that perhaps social studies teaching does not stress social participation, one of the goals identified in the NCSS curriculum guidelines. This observation is also supported by the results of Exercise RS 007, which required respondents to identify three important problems facing large cities in the United States. Of the thirteen-year-olds, 37.9% could do this; 8.8% of the seventeen-year olds; and only 66.1% of the adults could respond successfully. This is an interesting result since our society is predominantly urban

Exercise RS 019 required respondents to identify where they would look to find information relative to firemen in the city, and whether farms still have horses. Only 35.7% of the nine-year-olds (the only respondents to this item) were able to correctly identify where one would look to find out about firemen, but 73.2% were able to correctly identify where one would look to determine whether farms still had horses. If this item is accepted on face value, it might suggest that even though we have a predominantly urban population, our curricular offerings to elementary school children are suggestive of another age.

Exercise RS 022 required respondents to identify the page number, from the index of an American history text, where information relative

to three topics would be found. Of the thirteen-year-old group, only 44.7% responded in an acceptable way, while 70.3% of the seventeen-year olds, and 66.6% of the adults provided acceptable responses. Since this is such a basic skill, one cannot help wonder whether schools actually teach, and assess, the ability to use such things as the table of contents and the index to textbooks.

If one accepts the suggestion that approximately two-thirds of the NAEP are desirable and do assess important social studies outcomes, the NAEP results should be studied carefully. And, if one accepts a standard of performance of 60 or 70 percent for various age groups, exercises for which acceptable responses were lower should be carefully studied. Such analysis can point to some weaknesses in terms of skills development. On the other hand, some readers will notice that certain areas of social studies goals seem to have been avoided by the NAEP exercises. Social participation and applying skills to the values of a free society (an NAEP objective) were not assessed by the released skill times for 1971-72. It is true that the revised social studies objectives have been expanded and modified according to age groups, so it will be interesting to examine the results of the 1975-76 assessment.

NAEP is an information-producing endeavor. One may agree or disagree with certain emphases, but the effort represents the largest data collection eff rt ever attempted in American education. To take NAEP less than seriously would be questionable educational thinking. Finally,

a caution seems warranted. NAEP results are not reported to establish norms against which individual curricula are to be judged. But, it seems inevitable that, as the results of the 1975-76 assessments are available, educators will look for improvement in the percentages of acceptable responses. When this has occurred norms will have been, even if implicitly, established. Educators at all levels need to apply NAEP results with caution.

APPENDIX I

I. Have Curiosity About Human Affairs

A. Identify and define problems and issues
B. Formulate generalizations and hypotheses capable of being tested.
C. Obtain information from a variety of sources.
D. Distinguish facts from opinion, relevant from irrelevant information, and reliable from unreliable sources.
E. Detect logical errors, unstated assumptions, and unwarranted assertions; question unsupported generalizations; are aware of the complex nature of social causation and understand that sequence or relationship does not necessarily imply causation.
F. Use data and evaluative criteria to make decisions.

II. Use Analytic-Scientific Procedures Effectively

A. Raise questions and seek answers.
B. Are open to new information and ideas.
C. Try to understand why other people think and act as they do.

III. Are Sensitive to Creative-Intuitive Methods of Explaining the Human Condition

A. Read history, philosophy, and fiction.
B. Obtain insight into human affairs from history and philosophy, and from fiction and other forms of art.
C. Recognize the role of creative-intuitive methods in scientific inquiry.
D. Distinguish personalized explanations of human affairs from scientific-objective explanations.

IV. Have Knowledge Relevant to the Major Ideas and Concerns of Social Scientists

A. Understand some of the distinctive modes of inquiry (questions and approaches) of social scientists.
B. Understand some of the major relationships involving culture, the group, and the self.
C. Understand some of the major characteristics of economic systems, especially the American economic system.
D. Understand some of the major characteristics of the geographic (spatial) distributions of man and his activities, and of man's interactions with the physical environment.

E. Understand some of the major historical developments.
F. Understand some of the characteristics of the major systems of government, particularly the political system of the United States.

V. Have a Reasoned Commitment to the Values That Sustain a Free Society

A. Believe in the fundamental worth of the individual and can justify their belief.
B. Believe in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify their belief.
C. Believe in the rule of law and can justify their belief.
D. Believe in open opportunity for advancement and can justify their belief.
E. Are willing to act for the general interest.
F. Are willing to participate in decision making relevant to their lives.